

A Systematic Note on *Ocenebra poulsoni* Carpenter, 1865

BY

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(6 Text figures)

FEW WEST AMERICAN muricid species have defied satisfactory generic placement as stubbornly as *Ocenebra poulsoni* Carpenter, 1865 (Figure 1). This taxon has been alternately associated with *Ocenebra* and *Tritonalia* because of the nomenclatural confusion surrounding these two names. It is, however, a matter of record that the most frequent name combination for it has been *Ocenebra poulsoni*.

In the course of work on the radulae of muricid species and genera, and on an illustrated guide to that family,

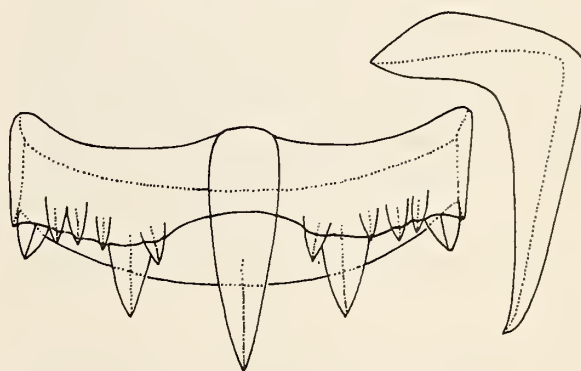


Figure 2

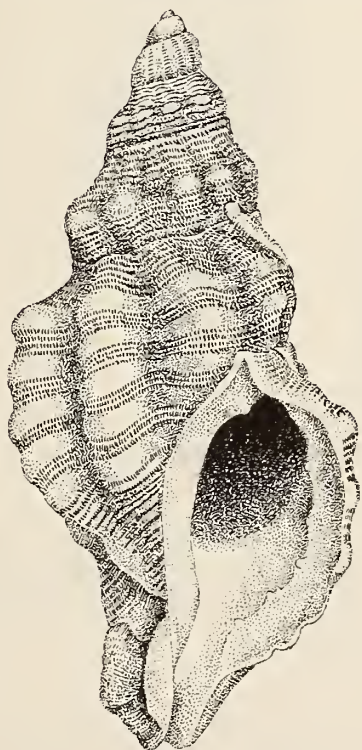
Two-thirds of a radular row of "*O.*" *poulsoni* Cpr., 1865

Figure 1

Shell of *Ocenebra poulsoni* Carpenter, 1865
(SDSNH 42372)

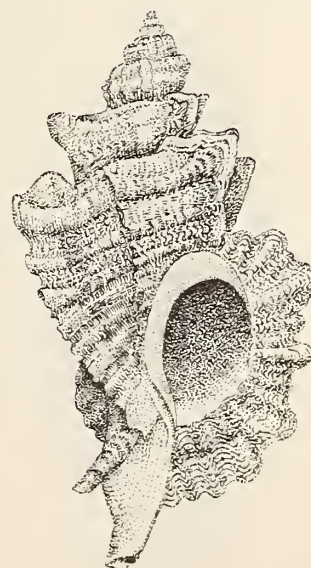


Figure 3

Shell of *Ocenebra erinaceus* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Coll. D'Attilio)

an attempt was made to assign this species to an appropriate genus. The radula is unquestionably ocenebrine (Figure 2), but the shell appears to differ substantially from typical *Ocenebra*.

The type species of *Ocenebra* (*O. erinaceus* (Linnaeus, 1758)) (Figure 3) typically has a moderately large (40 to 45 mm), broadly trivariolate shell with a sealed siphonal canal and a strongly scabrous shell surface. In contrast to this, *O. poulsoni* has a somewhat larger (50 to 60 mm), relatively slender, fusiform shell with an open siphonal canal, varices that are erratic in number and placement, and very fine sculpture consisting primarily of numerous, finely incised grooves and fine axial lamellae. This imparts a microscopically scabrous texture to the shell surface.

The obvious distinctness of *Ocenebra poulsoni* from all other West American ocenebrine species had led to its comparison with other muricids encountered in the preparation of an impending worldwide guide to the family. The only species with a shell of suitable size, form and other features is *Ergalatax contracta* (Reeve, 1846) (Figure 4). An examination of the radula (Figure 5), however, has indicated no close relationship between the two species.

This suggested the necessity of a new generic taxon for this species until I became aware of two papers that bear on the subject. These are by DALL (1898) and LOWE (1931).

In the first of these papers Dall described a new species, *Fusus roperi* (Figure 6) and, although commenting on



Figure 4

Shell of *Ergalatax contracta* (Reeve, 1846) (Coll. D'Attilio)

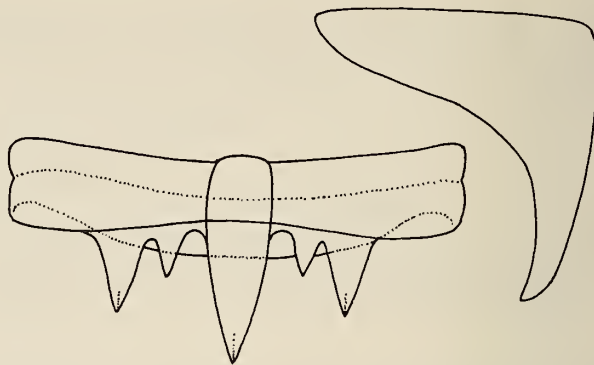


Figure 5

Two-thirds of a radular row of *Ergalatax contracta* (Reeve, 1846)



Figure 6

Shell of juvenile specimen of "*O.*" *poulsoni* Cpr., 1865 (SDSNH 50738) ¹

¹ Figure 6 represents a juvenile specimen of the approximate size and age of Dall's holotype of *Roperia roperi*. I have seen this holotype and the figured specimen (SDSNH 50738) differs from it only in possessing teeth on the inner surface of the outer lip and in its locality.

its resemblance to *Ocenebra* and *Muricidea*, concluded by erecting for it a new "section," *Roperia*. Dall's comparisons with *Fusus colus*, *Sipho* and *Chrysodomus*, although causing him to separate the species in question from members of these genera, are indicative of his assumption of

a buccinid placement for the genus. Somewhat mysteriously, Dall's holotype remained the unique specimen of *Roperia roperi* for 33 years, in spite of its well-collected type locality (San Pedro, California).

In the second paper (Lowe, 1931) Dall's species was conclusively shown to be synonymous with *Tritonalia poulsoni* (Carpenter, 1865), Dall's confusion apparently resulting from his misinterpretation of a juvenile as an adult. This successfully solved the problem of the identity of *Roperia roperi*, but did nothing to ascertain the appropriate generic placement of "*Ocenebra*" *poulsoni*.

At the present time "*Ocenebra*" *poulsoni* cannot be assigned to any of the generally accepted West American muricid genera. In spite of this, there appears to be no need to erect an entirely new generic taxon for the species. The systematic placement of "*O.*" *poulsoni* can be expressed as follows:

Roperia Dall, 1898. Type species: *Roperia roperi* Dall, 1898 (= *Ocenebra poulsoni* Carpenter, 1865), by original designation.

Thus the correct combination of names for this species is *Roperia poulsoni* (Carpenter, 1865).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Literature Cited

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1898. On a new species of *Fusus* from California. *The Nautilus*
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1931. What is *Roperia roperi* Dall? With notes on Turridae and Columbellidae. *The Nautilus* 45 (2): 51-52

